



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PO Box 47890 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Tel: (360) 236-4501 • FAX: (360) 586-7424 • TDD Relay Service: 1-800-833-6388

August 2006

STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION

Community water fluoridation began in the United States over sixty years ago. Currently, about two-thirds of the United States population is served by fluoridated water. Scientific research indicates that water fluoridation is the most cost-effective, practical and safe means for reducing the occurrence of tooth decay. People who regularly use fluoridated water at the recommended levels, have healthier teeth and fewer cavities than those without access to fluoridated water.

Dental disease is an infectious bacterial disease process that begins in infancy and continues throughout life. Fluoride, when ingested in drinking water, strengthens the enamel of developing teeth. When in contact with teeth in the mouth, it helps to remineralize decayed surfaces, harden exposed root surfaces and inhibit decay-causing bacteria in adults and children. The action of fluoride in preventing tooth decay provides health benefits throughout life.

Public health makes prevention available to all citizens, regardless of age, gender or socioeconomic status. Fluoridation assures that this population-based preventive measure benefits everyone. The Surgeon General of the United States and over one hundred national and international organizations endorse water fluoridation. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes the fluoridation of drinking water as one of ten great public health achievements of the twentieth century.

Community water fluoridation is a strategy included in the Washington State Public Health Improvement Plan. The Department of Health supports water fluoridation as a sound population-based public health measure, and it supports communities in their efforts to fluoridate community water supplies.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maxine Hayes".

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH
State Health Officer